

Amendments

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Currently amended) An isolated bacterium comprising: an F⁺ episome that confers high efficiency transformability; one or more mutations that allow transformation of methylated nucleic acids; one or more mutations that allow transformation with unmethylated nucleic acids; and one or more mutations that confer resistance to bacteriophage infection.

2. (Original) The bacterium of claim 1 wherein said bacterium is an *Escherichia coli* strain.

3. (Original) The bacterium of claim 2 wherein said strain is K-12.

4. (Original) The bacterium of claim 3 wherein the genotype of said F⁺ episome comprises proAB⁺ lacI^q lacZΔM15 Tn10(Tet^R).

5. (Original) The bacterium of claim 3 wherein said one or more mutations that allow transformation of unmethylated nucleic acids involve the *hsdR*, *hsdM* and/or *hsdS* genes.

6. (Original) The bacterium of claim 3 wherein said one or more mutations that allow transformation of methylated nucleic acids involve the *mcrA*, *mcrBC* and/or *mrr* genes.

7. (Original) The bacterium of claim 3 wherein said bacteriophage is phage T1.

8. (Original) The bacterium of claim 3 wherein said one or more mutations that confer resistance to bacteriophage infection involve the *tonA* gene.

9. (Original) An isolated *Escherichia coli* K-12 bacterium, said bacterium having a genotype comprising *mcrA* $\Delta(mrr\text{-}hsdRMS\text{-}mcrBC)$ *tonA* / F' *proAB*⁺ *lacI*^q *lacZ* Δ MS15 *Tn10(Tet*^R*)*.

10. (Original) The bacterium of claim 9, wherein said genotype comprises: *mcrA* $\Delta(mrr\text{-}hsdRMS\text{-}mcrBC)$ $\Phi 80(lacZ)\Delta$ M15 $\Delta(lacZYA\text{-}argF)$ U169 *endA1* *recA1* *supE44* *thi-1* *gyrA96* *relA1* *deoR* *tonA* *panD* / F' *proAB*⁺ *lacI*^q *lacZ* Δ M15 *Tn10(Tet*^R*)*.

11. (Original) The bacterium of claim 9, wherein said bacterium is *Escherichia coli* BRL3946 (NRRL accession No. B-30640).

12. (Original) The bacterium of claim 9, wherein said bacterium is a derivative of *Escherichia coli* BRL3946 (NRRL accession No. B-30640).